



REMARKS BY DEPUTY MINISTER FISH MAHLALELA AT THE CONNECTION SESSION ON TGCSA'S BASIC QUALITY VERIFICATION (BQV) PROGRAMME AT AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA - DURBAN

11 May 2023

It is my singular honor indeed to be accorded this wonderful opportunity to share with you this morning on the sidelines of this magnificent Africa Travel Indaba.

John Ruskin says "Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort." This is true, especially today as we celebrate excellence during the launch of the KwaZulu-Natal leg of the Basic Quality Verification Programme.

This Africa's Travel Indaba is the largest tourism trade show on the African continent, bringing together travel industry professionals, exhibitors, and media from around the world to showcase the best of Africa's tourism offerings.

The event provides a platform for African countries to promote their destinations, products, and services while offering networking opportunities, educational seminars, and insights into the latest trends in the travel industry.

Watching Basic Quality Verification Programme grows and evolves over a period of time ordinarily means there is something good happening.

The BQV (Basic Quality Verification) is the Tourism Grading Council's new programme, we today launching its KwaZulu-Natal leg at the Africa's Travel Indaba, after a successful pilot project in the Eastern Cape.

This programme helps Small tourism establishments in under-resourced villages, towns, and small dorpias (VTSDs) reach their full potential by giving them access to training, expertise, and resources, as well as TGCSA's valuable stamp of approval.

Hotels, B&Bs, guesthouses, and homestays tucked away in small towns deserve their time in the sun, and the BQV does just that. The programme offers 'verification' to ungraded tourism establishments in VTSDs free of charge.

Establishments in VTSDs make up the foundation of the South African tourism industry. These small establishments offer authentic South African experiences, but travelers still want to know their basic comfort level standards of safety, cleanliness, and customer experience will be met.

With this verification, these establishments can offer their customer peace of mind, while still offering them an authentic experience of our culture and hospitality. Basic Quality Verification helps to ensure that a certain standard of safety, cleanliness, and customer experience is guaranteed across the entire tourism value chain.

Within the Tourism Management Act, the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa is mandated to promote excellence in the provision of tourism services, facilities, and products.

But it's important to remember that our mandate is not just relevant to paying or graded members – those who can afford to be graded. Instead, we should be creating an environment to set up for all tourism establishments to succeed.

Because tourism is a vital contributor to the South African economy, creating an environment where tourism establishments of all shapes and sizes can succeed, and thrive, is a key way in which South African Tourism contributes to our Tourism Sector Recovery Plan that we developed in 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of course, as a sector that facilitates mobility and human interaction, the tourism industry has been among the hardest hit by the pandemic, and the socio-economic effects of the pandemic are still felt in our sector today.

In response to this, our Tourism Sector Recovery Plan aims to ensure that, going forward, the sector is more sustainable and more resilient, with the primary goal of the plan being for it to yield a recovered sector, characterized by greater inclusion.

And what better encapsulates the idea of 'greater inclusion' than the Grading Council's new programme? At yesterday's panel discussion about the Basic Quality Verification programme, the topic was 'impacting tourism from the ground up', and that's exactly what we are doing with BQV.

We are widening the circle, giving smaller establishment access to the resources, training, and expertise they need in order to welcome in the customers they've been waiting for.

The BQV programme offers tangible value beyond 'verification', beyond its stamp of approval. It offers value that supports establishments in VTSDs with real world problems, on the foundation of verification.

Benefits of this programme include:

- Providing access to the Enterprise Development Programmes administered by the Department of Tourism (such as welcome training, speed marketing training, ESD, NDT, and provincial training and development)
- Providing access to the Services Excellence Programmes administered by the Department of Tourism to provide service training to owners and employees (such as speed marketing, trade show participation and access to the ESD programme)
- Providing access to funding opportunities to develop their offering to meet core requirements for formal grading over time (through market exposure, access to funding networks, etc.)

Because the Tourism Grading Council is not just a body that is in service of paying members but is committed to being in service of all tourism establishments, we developed and implemented BQV as a means for us to help small tourism establishments form the foundations of our industry.

And it is on this strong foundation that we can rebuild our sector as we recover. Because if we recover well, then the tourism industry will continue to do what it does best: Create opportunities for economic inclusion, economic opportunity, youth employment, women empowerment – which are set out in our Tourism Sector Recovery Plan.

The Plan's 8 priority interventions are identified as the following:

- Ensuring energy security
- Growing the productive economy
- Mass public employment interventions
- Infrastructure investment
- Green economy interventions
- Strengthening food security
- Support for tourism recovery and growth
- Gender equality and the inclusion of women and youth

BQV clearly embodies so many of these priority interventions, but we've been so proud of the way the programme empowers youth by training and employing unemployed graduates to verify the establishments in the programme.

The establishments we verify through BQV are usually at the centre of their communities, bringing in business to the businesses around them. They create the environment for those around them to thrive and grow – and shouldn't we learn a lesson from them?

These establishments know that they thrive when the businesses around them thrive. They create a small-scale model of our mandate: Because we are aiming to create a nation-wide environment where all tourism establishments are equipped with the resources, knowledge, training, and expertise to thrive.

And so, as we actively participate in the revitalization of our industry, and watch as our recovery plan comes to fruition, it's programmes such as BQV and the establishments it empowers that allow us to move forward, to be inclusive, to create an environment that sets up for all tourism establishments to succeed.

I am excited to watch as this programme is rolled out in KwaZulu-Natal, because it's truly impacting the tourism industry from the ground up. Let us continue to celebrate excellence while further positioning our country's competitiveness in the global tourism market.

I thank you.